

THE XXth CENTURY

VOL. VI

SHANGHAI, MARCH 1944

No. 3

SOCIALISM FROM ABOVE

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THE terse communiqués of the German High Command have informed us of Allied air raids on scores of European cities in northern France and Belgium, in Holland and the Rhineland, on the coast of the North Sea and in central and southern Germany, in Finland, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, and Rumania. And since the beginning of the large-scale terror raids in March 1942, millions of people have had to abandon their homes in these cities, many of them having lost much or all of their possessions.

We recently came across a letter-to-the-editor in a newspaper of a neutral country. The writer, himself a neutral, gave an entirely unembellished account of what a bombing attack on a European city looks like today, and how, for example, the contents of a phosphorus canister weighing a hundred kilos stream like burning lava down the stairs of the house that has been hit, setting fire to everything in its path. The writer then criticized an air-raid drill he had watched on the previous day in his own country. He explained that much effort had been exerted on instructions how to combat bombs of the type used way back in 1940, a type which every six-year-old girl in Germany could now deal with alone.

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Before the war, when morning came, one lay in the cosy warmth of one's bed and thought of the worries and tasks that the day would bring—the children of school, the father of his job, the mother of her housework—or of the joys to be looked forward to: a walk in the park, a

book from the library, a visit to the theater in the evening.

Today, when dawn breaks over Berlin, Turin, or Sofia, the people welcome it as a harbinger of life after a night of death, destruction, and supreme exertion. They rub their eyes which are red from sleeplessness, smoke, and phosphorus fumes; they dig themselves out of the ruins of their homes; they carry the few possessions they have rescued into the less damaged house of a neighbor, and go back to work.

What they think of when they walk through the streets of ruins where the police have already hung up notices (red cross—"danger, do not enter"; black cross—"no danger"; green disk—"has been searched for victims," etc.) can be seen from the advertisements in the newspapers appearing in districts around bombed cities. Under a special new heading "Information Wanted" there are long columns of advertisements of the following nature:

MARGOT, HILDEGARD, AND INGEBOURG, WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU. WE ARE AT ERNA'S IN MOELLN.

WHERE IS MY HUSBAND MAX BERGER?

WHO LAST SAW MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER, RIGHT LEG IN A SPLINT?

WHO CAN GIVE INFORMATION REGARDING MRS. MAGDA KRAMER, 65, PROBABLY REMOVED IN AN INJURED CONDITION FROM HAMBURG ON JULY 28?

Suddenly one's attention is caught by a bit of house wall left standing on which a message has hastily been scribbled with a piece of chalk. And now the world appears transformed, for one knows that the person being sought is still alive.

All that the bombing victims have left is what they carry with them—in a suitcase, in their heads, in their hearts. The photographs of the wedding or of an excursion into the country in the album which they sometimes used to pore over or show to visitors, have been lost in the flight from the fire. The books chosen and bought with such care throughout the years are burned. Perhaps they had thought: I'll take the Schiller along whatever happens. And then, after all, they did not, because everything occurred so quickly and there were more important things to be done—turning off the gas or carrying the children downstairs.

The portrait of the grandparents; the piece of jewelry given as a wedding present; the carved chest; the lovely china bought with the savings of a whole year; the couple of suits and the winter overcoat; the family Bible; the letters from the husband at the front—everything is burned and gone.

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If we out here try to imagine the Europe of today, every European among us first visualizes his own home. This Frenchman thinks of his little town in the rich plains of Normandy, and this German of the neat two-storied brick house with its window boxes and white curtains in which his parents lived when he last saw them. This Greek's thoughts speed from Shanghai's winter to the sunny harbor town where his sweetheart is waiting for him, and those of this Finn to his blonde wife and his children in the red wooden house in the deep forests of his native land. What shall I find when I go home one day? All ask the same anxious question.

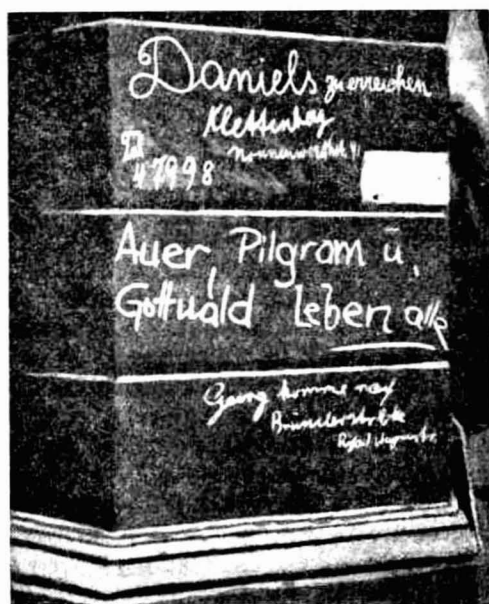
But above and beyond this personal issue is the question being asked by all politically-minded people: what will be the consequences of the air raids on Germany?

German sources have repeatedly declared that, as a result of the decentralization of industry which set in long before the war and was considerably speeded up during the last few years, the destruction

of war-essential plants has remained far behind Allied expectations. If even the Soviets were able to remove their industries to such an extent that, in spite of the vast territories occupied by the Germans in 1941/42, they could continue the war with immense armaments, then the Germans were all the more capable of doing so. Hence in this article we shall deal not with the material consequences of the terror raids but with their spiritual and moral effects.

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One way to explain the fact that, after a hundred nights of air raids, the German will to fight has remained unbroken is by realizing that a complete revaluation of all values has taken place in Germany during these last two years.



How bombing victims communicate: a house corner left standing in a bombed district bears the following messages—"Daniels to be reached Klettenberg." "Auer, Pilgram, and Gottwald all alive." "Georg come to Richard Wagner Street." The white square is a strip of phosphorescent paint applied to prevent people from bumping into house corners during blackouts.

In normal times, many would have regarded the loss of all their possessions as a disaster which deprived life of any further meaning. Today they give it but a passing thought. They know that life goes on even without possessions, and that much that was lost in the conflagra-

tions of these nights had no true value but only an imaginary one.

The true value of the carved chest was not the price it had cost but the fact that it was a gift from one's parents at the christening of their first grandson; and the true value of the china dinner service was not in the amount paid for it but in all the sacrifices, big and small, made for so long to be able to buy it. One's parents' love, the little sacrifices made by husband and wife, did not alter when the chest burned to cinders and the china broke into a thousand fragments.

It is true that, when one would like to turn to Schiller for advice and inspiration, one can no longer simply pick up the volume of his poems; but one only has to close one's eyes and to search a little in one's memory, and the verses will come back to one. And does one really need a photograph to recall one's wedding day? Did it not mean so much more than any photograph could ever have expressed?

Like a man who suddenly loses his sight, the bombing victim begins to build up a spiritual kingdom that is all the richer for his loss. Material possessions, without which existence could formerly not be imagined, have been reduced to their true value. Even one's idea of happiness has undergone a revaluation. To be with one's dear ones, to be healthy, indeed, just to be alive—these are blessings of undreamed-of worth; they become precious possessions, every hour of which is consciously and gratefully enjoyed instead of being taken for granted. In the coming night they may be lost, just as so many around one have lost them: people whose limbs have been crushed, whose mothers have been burned to death, or whose children are scattered.

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In an article published in our last issue, a young officer spoke about his "Thoughts at Night," and the quintessence of these thoughts is "return to simplicity":

To be simple, when we get home, in everything; to have simple pleasures and simple happiness again; to take pleasure in flowers, trees, children. How we shall enjoy seeing the birches again in our home village!

Thus war is to us not a destroyer but a transformer. Now that we are so close to death we have really begun to understand life.

And this is what a woman writes from one of the bombed cities of the Rhineland:

We are no longer able to grasp many things which seem so important to others. All we desire is simple songs and quiet, plain words. We would like to live quite simply and sincerely, without folly and pretense. What we have gained is the urge for genuineness, now that suffering has bared our innermost selves; comradeship, warm, sympathetic kindness, charitable care without hypocrisy; the strong, uniting knowledge of a common danger. Soldiers may understand us. When they return to us from the battlefield, we understand each other without words.

At the front and at home they speak the same language.

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One of the greatest disasters experienced by the German nation in modern times was the inflation in the years after Versailles which took all that a great part of the population had possessed in savings, war loans, and bonds. Yet in one way even this catastrophe had its positive side: by bringing about a process of material leveling on a grand scale, at the end of which a large part of the middle class and the working class, the university professor and the craftsman, possessed only that which they had in the way of objects at home or of knowledge and skill in brain and hand, it destroyed many barriers between the classes as far as they had been built up on differences in property. This in turn contributed toward the creation of that community spirit in all strata of the population which ten years later found expression in the victory of National-Socialism in Germany.

Compared to the leveling left behind by the steam roller of the air raids, even the inflation pales. In those city blocks over which it has rolled, almost all differences of property have disappeared. What has been rescued from it is not what one possessed but only what one is and what one bears within oneself as the heritage of his nation.

The inflation spared the clever banker, the incendiary bomb does not. His house may burn a little longer than that of one of the bank's charwomen—that is the only difference.

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Not long ago a letter came into our hands which a young German artist had written to his mother before he fell at Demyansk in January 1943. We knew him. He had a sensitive artist's nature, entirely devoted to beauty, and it had been difficult to imagine him in the grim business of war and in the primitive quarters of the Russian winter. But not a word of privation or suffering is there in his letter. It radiates the strength and satisfaction he found in the comradeship with the men of his company, and it is permeated with the conviction that, in spite of all hardship, war awakens the best in man and removes all that is non-essential.

Similar words have been written in former wars. What is unique in the present war in Europe is that this time the home front is passing through the same process of mobilization of all spiritual forces through suffering and death which was formerly known only to the battle fronts. With an acuteness unknown for centuries, the problem of the community is facing the people of Europe in all its immensity. Those who have learned to stand shoulder to shoulder when putting out incendiary bombs or carrying neighbors out of burning houses or finding shelter for weeks or months on end with total strangers, know today how much they depend on each other. In the community they have discovered a strength of whose existence they had never even dreamed, the strength of socialism in the best sense of the word.

No one can read letters or reports from the bombed areas of Germany without admiration for the extent of the organization and discipline with which people and government take precautions against air raids and attempt to reduce their damage to a minimum. We are not referring to the defense by night fliers, antiaircraft batteries, and other more modern weapons which are causing mounting losses to the Anglo-Americans, but to civilian measures which have been carried out since the Allied plan of terror raids became apparent. Long before the first bomb fell, a large proportion of the

women and children had been evacuated to less exposed places. There are probably few communities left in Europe which have not taken in people from the threatened areas. Indeed, precautionary measures have been carried to such lengths that even the banks in those cities anticipating air raids have introduced a "double entry" system of bookkeeping and regularly send copies of their customers' accounts to branches in safe areas. Field kitchens, food, doctors, bandages, clothing, even soap and towels, are kept in readiness in sufficient quantities for the air-raid victims. The German State Railway has organized special trains which hasten to the stricken towns with experienced helpers and the necessary materials. These towns are immediately provided with special rations of food, cigarettes, and clothing, so that the damage suffered by them is borne by the whole nation. Just as the soldier at the front knows that everything humanly possible is being done to feed him and to aid him should he be wounded, so does the civilian in the threatened areas.

Here again the difference between the battle front and the home front is being wiped out.

Soldiers at the front have always known that the outcome depends on every single one of them. In total war, when bombs are raining, every civilian knows this too. This knowledge makes him aware of the important role he is playing and gives him the historical perspective revealed by that same woman from the Rhineland:

In the evenings, when the setting sun sends its crimson rays onto the ruins of our cruelly thinned-out cities, a gigantic vision arises before us: white broken-off chimneys now lie across torn roofs, our descendants will live one day in new settlements, and many will come to make pilgrimages to the broken-off Gothic spires and bow their heads before the graves of those who were killed, recognizing that an Occidental bastion, a part of creative, culture-bearing Europe, was defended here against the most violent assault in history.

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In 1918 the German morale collapsed in two places—in the large cities and in the Battle Fleet, which had been practically idle since the Battle of Jutland (1916)—at a time when the morale of the

men at the front and of the U-boat flotillas, who faced death every day, was unaffected. Churchill and Roosevelt should have remembered this when by means of their terror raids they turned all of Germany into a battle front with a front morale. The British have claimed that the German retaliation raids on England in 1940 strengthened English morale. What makes them think that, by throwing ten or twenty times more bombs on chiefly civilian German targets, the result on German morale will be any different?

What impresses one most when one reads letters written by people from bombed areas in Germany to relatives in East Asia is the calm, matter-of-fact way in which they bear suffering, even the death of their nearest and dearest. Just as a man going to the front calmly joins the ranks of his battle-scarred division, so his wife quietly joins the ranks of mourning German women when he falls or when a bomb kills her child.

Although the grief of the individual is not diminished in the absolute sense, it is diminished relatively when it is shared with hundreds of thousands of others. The private world recedes before that of the nation. Is there not a difference even in peace time between a mother losing her child alone as a result of a street accident and losing it in common with many others as the result of an earthquake disaster? And yet an earthquake is a natural phenomenon which man is powerless to prevent. All he can do is curse it. It is a different matter in the case of air-raid victims. Everyone knows who is responsible for these. The people as a whole are not powerless against them. They know that there is a way of hitting back: to grit one's teeth, work, fight, and endure till final victory.

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Since the beginning of the terror raids, a new weapon has been added to those with which the German nation is now fighting: poverty. Hitherto, poverty was unknown in the arsenal of the powers. How great a role it is able to play is beginning to become apparent. To see

this we need only compare the American soldier with the German.

The American soldier in Europe remembers the easy life he was accustomed to at home. At the back of his mind is the gnawing feeling that he is fighting thousands of miles from home against people who have never done him or his country any harm, that he has to suffer hardship, risk being wounded or even killed while at home big business is raking in huge profits.

When the German soldier standing in the wintry night of Russia or on the Channel coast thinks of home, his thoughts do not turn to automobile, baseball, or movie, but to the ruins of his home town. He knows that this home town of his will remain in ruins even after the war and that the nightmare of Bolshevism is in store for it if he does not contribute his utmost toward the achievement of victory. Every single person in Germany must feel it: the sacrifices already made are so immense that they are worth every additional effort.

"It is the air-raid victims from western Germany and Berlin," states a report on Vienna published on November 14 in a Swiss paper, "who in their bottomless hatred are preaching revenge on the British, who have taken their all."

In former days, agitators used to tell the working classes that they had nothing to lose but their chains. Today, without any agitators, everyone in Germany feels:

We have nothing to lose but our poverty and the poverty of our children and children's children.

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Violent hatred for the enemies and a burning desire for revenge are accumulating in the hearts of the millions who have experienced terror raids on the European continent. Yet hatred or political considerations alone would not suffice to make them carry on as they do. In the hours—and years—of trial such as these, emotions and irrationalities which it is difficult to clothe in words become active and perhaps decisive. There is that complex term "duty" which, partic-

ularly since the days of Frederick the Great and Immanuel Kant, has become a sacred principle for every German. There is love, enabling the people to do the seemingly impossible—love for their family, their home, their Germany, with its forests and factories, its fields and songs. And there is belief—the belief that, after a thousand years of groping and searching, the nation as a whole has finally reached the high road which leads to the consummation of its historic mission and to a better world, and the belief that sinister forces are trying to deprive it at the last moment of reaching its goal.

All these hidden factors and the determination not to let down the men at the front are mobilized as driving forces in the hearts of the men, women, and children who carry on in the hail of bombs.

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The enemy himself is the best witness to the fact that the people of Germany have not become softer through the trials of the last few years but harder. Not even American or British propaganda can quote convincing proofs to the effect that the bombings have affected the morale of the German nation. In big headlines they report every German town destroyed by Anglo-American planes; but they are unable to report examples of a broken German will to fight.

One can judge how unbroken Germany's vitality still is by the recently published fact that in the first nine months of 1943 there were 42,000 more births in Germany than during the same period of the year before, and that after every raid the number of people willing to adopt orphans by far exceeds that of children orphaned by the raid.

Even so anti-German a newspaper as the Stockholm *Dagens Nyheter* published on November 26, 1943, the following opinion of its Berlin correspondent:

Berlin has had a very bad time. But—and I say this as my personal impression without being influenced in any way by propaganda—the behavior of the population of Berlin in these difficult days was unique, yes, more courageous, determined, and unyielding than one could ever have imagined.

The people of Berlin have shown themselves to be of iron stock. I have seen countless bombing victims walking composedly through the streets of Berlin with their bundles; but I have not seen a single man or woman in Berlin who gave expression to anxiety, let alone despair.

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That the old Europe will never return after victory is a fact of which the people of Europe are much more aware than we are out here. Not only will it take years for the wounds inflicted upon the soil of Europe by the war to heal, and even more years for the grief over all the flowering life swept away by the war to fade; life itself will be different. "The change taking place in us is gigantic," writes someone from a bombed town. "Little things become great: the sight of a child, a kind word, an honest emotion. In this purification we are giving up our old, beloved, and familiar world."

In another article appearing in this issue we have tried to form a picture of what the cities of Europe will look like after the war. We cannot do the same with regard to the people. To do that we would have to have lived and fought side by side with them.

But there is one thing we can boldly predict: the supreme experience of this war for battle front and home front alike is that of comradeship and community spirit. The quintessence of National-Socialism: "The common good before private advantage," which was at first a challenge, will be a matter of course by the end of this war. Indeed, after the war this principle will be valid not only on the scale of village, factory, or the German nation, but on a European scale.

In this way, the result of the terror raids will be quite different from what their originators expected. They went to war and let loose terror from the air to destroy the National-Socialist ideology. Instead of this, their war is contributing toward the final consummation of the National-Socialist Revolution of 1933.

The terror raids are in the literal sense of the words a "revolution from above."